1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1355 AW17 Telugu AW17

arising in their respective fields, and were to help in doing specific investigations which were assigned to them from time to time. I had the privilege of directing both the research and the social service programme, and while the units were left free to a considerable extent in their respective welfare work, I was associated with the planning, direction and conduct of the research itself at every stage. The inter-faculty teams worked in the village for two summer vacations—extending to twenty weeks—and the anthropological unit remained in touch with the village for a whole year. At various stages the larger team included three women members —a doctor, a sociologist belonging to the Muslim community for work among the *purdah*-observing Muslim women, and an American lady, with training in psychology and anthropology, who was a 'guest' member of the team. The anthropology unit consisted of five members, each with post-graduate training in anthropology, four of whom spoke the regional language of the village and had spent many years in the countryside of the Telangana area of Hyderabad. Three of these members had previous training in practical field-work. As they were all Hindus by birth, we had further to seek the help of a woman lecturer trained in sociology for work among the Muslim women.

To begin with, the response of the village people was rather cold. For a short while we were regarded as missionaries; then as government agents brought into the village for organizing anti-communist propaganda. Some high-caste Hindus thought that we were there to instigate the low-caste untouchables to revolt against them. But our resources, especially our tents, crockery and cooks and buses, impressed them. The co-operation of highly placed officials rehabilitated us in the eyes of the village folk, and many of them who went to the city and made enquiries about us from educated relations returned to the village satisfied about our credentials. But more than all this, the excellent work of the Medical unit established rapport with the community, and the sympathetic welfare activities of the Agriculture, Veterinary and Education units further helped us to establish more intimate contacts with the people. They were benefiting by our presence: in the first two months 390 cases were treated by the Medical unit; several useful demonstrations were given by the Agriculture and Veterinary units, who also distributed vegetable seeds, plants of fruit-bearing trees and modern chemical fertilizers. The adult

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

education centre attracted many people from the village; both the library and cultural programmes became popular. The Engineering unit dug soakpits in the village, improved the village well and constructed several model smokeless ovens. This changed the attitude of the people considerably. To begin with the investigators making anthropological enquiry were regarded as a nuisance; now they were tolerated as inquisitive but friendly outsiders. In a few days there was a change for the better. We had never talked politics or religion, there was no propaganda or attempt at reform and no superiority of city-ways and sneering at the rustic ways of the village people in our attitude. Indifference turned into warmth and friendship, and at this point we intensified our anthropological investigations. At first a general sociological census of the community was taken, and later investigations of specific problems were started. A sample of 120 families representing different castes and levels of income, education and urban contacts was selected for intensive investigations. Episodic and topical life-histories were recorded from 80 people, besides 11 full biographies. This was done in a series of free-association interviews, which were controlled only in the final stages. Besides this the established method of participant observation and the usual techniques of anthropological enquiry were also used. The life-histories provide most of the material on inter-personal relations and attitudes, much of which has been translated in this book from the actual words of the informants. All the available village records were carefully studied, and as far as possible all the material collected was carefully checked. The research reports by other units on topics assigned to them—such as the medical examination of 1,200 people, a diet and nutritional survey, a survey of village agriculture and its problems, a survey of animal care and health—were carefully studied at the time of the preparation of this report and used at appropriate places; but most of them will be published, it is hoped, independently in professional journals.

My aim in this book has been to give a clear and intimate picture of some aspects of life in one Indian village. As the book is likely to be used by social anthropologists and sociologists as well as by others, I have endeavoured to keep my presentation fairly general. As our project had received considerable publicity in the Indian press we could not hide the identity of the village in a pseudonym. This in its turn has created several problems in the

I. Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

CHAPTER SEVEN

Living Together

1. INTER-PERSONAL RELATIONS

THE people of Shamirpet, like the other peasants of Andhra, exercise considerable reserve in their initial dealings with outsiders. The first impression that one gets regarding their attitude is one of extreme constriction, suspiciousness and guarded behaviour. When this initial reserve is broken down, they reveal themselves in a totally different light—as emotional, communicative, and at times even boisterous. Nearly all of them have great curiosity, and are easily attracted by anything that is even slightly uncommon or unusual. Opinions are freely expressed, and all public gatherings—big or small—are rather noisy. Middle-aged and elderly people generally have a grim expression, and it is considered a mark of respectability in women if they walk with their eyes downcast. But unobtrusiveness is not regarded as a virtue, and the people freely make comments and counter-comments on all subjects with which they may or may not have any concern. There is a great tradition for argument, which can easily drift into becoming a noisy quarrel or altercation. Tempers rise easily, and abuse may be showered volubly by both sides; but differences are patched up as easily, and it is not uncommon to see two people walking together as great friends although on the previous day they may have quarrelled bitterly on some trifling issue. In their inter-personal relations the people are hypercritical and very sensitive. This leads to a perpetual attitude of fault finding. As the people do not easily let go an opportunity of commenting on and criticizing their neighbours, their relations are never very smooth and certain. However, on occasions which demand a display of good-neighbourliness and generosity people

I: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

691 off small debts, serious sexual intrigues, domestic quarrels assuming serious proportions, etc., keep on coming before the village council again and again. It is very rarely that it has to take the final step of ordering the social boycott of an individual. Caste *panchayats*, on the other hand, take recourse to this weapon very often when breaches of caste convention are brought to their notice. Eating with a lower caste, sex intrigue outside the caste, failure in observing injunctions attached to the status of ritual impurity, and inability to perform any major ritual are all punished by ostracism. This involves denial of social equality to the ostracized family. No one will share food or drink with it. No member of such a family will be invited to attend a socio-religious ceremony, nor will anyone accept his invitation. Its status of social equality will be restored when it performs the necessary rituals for the expiation of its offence.

578 Our investigations did not reveal the existence of any serious inter-group tensions and conflicts in the community. Just before and after the Police Action there was some Hindu-Muslim tension: in the first phase Muslims terrorized the Hindus; in the second the Hindus looted property from one Muslim house and terrorized the other Muslims generally and their ringleaders particularly. Between different castes or living-quarters of the village, within living memory, there were only two major disputes. Their details are not remembered, but it is claimed that the tension was short-lived and cordiality was established very soon between the warring sections.

578 The corporate unity of the village finds its fullest expression
621 when the inhabitants come into conflict with outsiders. The
609 village of Aliyabad shares with Shamirpet the water from the tank for the purposes of irrigation. The ratio of water supplied to Shamirpet and Aliyabad has been fixed at 5:2. Over this there have always been some difficulties. One night the floodgates were opened, and the water that should have irrigated Shamirpet fields was diverted to Aliyabad fields. Next morning an organized team from Shamirpet attacked Aliyabad. There were three different theories regarding what had happened the previous night. Aliyabad people said that the guards of the floodgates had asked them to take the water under the impression that it was their turn. The guards said that being threatened with violence they allowed the Aliyabad men to divert the water to their area.

I. Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 , AW17 Telugu AW17

LIVING TOGETHER

Perhaps the fact of the matter was that Aliyabad men had obtained the favour by bribing the guards; but their excessive greed in not allowing any water into Shamirpet fields had exposed their game. Prompt official intervention checked ugly developments; and later the issue was resolved at inter-village level. But in the dispute itself the two villages had forgotten their internal differences and dissensions and each of them had acted as one body. Another instance of such concerted action and village unity is provided by the conflict between the residents of Shamirpet and eight army men from the nearby cantonment. These eight people came to the village in two army trucks and started loading their vehicles with firewood cut and stored by a resident of the village. Obviously the army men intended to take it away without payment. The owner of the house tried to check them, and in the process he was badly beaten up. In the meantime the news had reached the other village people, who came rushing to the spot armed with sticks. They did what they thought proper at the time to avenge the honour of the village. Outnumbered by the villagers, the army men returned to their camp, threatening to bring their company to destroy the entire village. Police intervened and the trouble was not allowed to develop further.

In a society resting on rigid division of the population into castes separated by strict rules governing touching, eating and drinking, sex relations and matrimony, and social distance prescribed by tradition it is essential that people realize certain limitations and accept certain conditions. Caste consciousness develops quite early in one's life and these limitations and conditions are absorbed long before maturity by all through conversation groups, playgroups and general social experience. So far there has been no attack on the general premises on which the society rests, and therefore no serious inter-group or inter-caste conflicts have arisen. The lower castes have accepted their inferior status, and while they have made efforts to improve their lot they have not openly revolted against it. In their turn the higher castes have also shown considerable adaptability, and recognizing the general social trend they have readjusted their attitudes and curbed some of the earlier excesses and injustices. They may still object to being touched by a low caste man, but they will not protest against his wearing superior clothing befitting only the upper castes.